

**Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge—Former Fort Devens Army Base**

Like Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge, Oxbow National Wildlife refuge is located on the former Fort Devens Army Base in Massachusetts. But while Assabet has been 10 years in the making, Oxbow is the result of three decades of land transfers from the Army, including restored Superfund land.

The Fort Devens Army Base transferred 711 acres to the Fish and Wildlife Service in 1974 and 1988, which became the original refuge. When the base closed in 1996, the Army began cleaning soil and groundwater contaminated from almost 80 years of military operations. In May 1999, the Oxbow refuge received an additional 836 acres from the Fort Devens Superfund site, as just one of the many redevelopment projects stemming from the former Army base. The refuge reached its current size with a final purchase of 120 acres of private land in Harvard, Massachusetts in 2001.

Flanking nearly eight miles of the Nashua River corridor, the Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge protects approximately 1,667 acres of wetlands and southern New England flood-plain forest in north-central Massachusetts. Large populations of both beaver and the threatened Blanding's turtle call this refuge home. In fact, the refuge and neighboring U.S. Army Training Area support the highest density of nesting Blanding's turtle in the eastern United States.

**Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge—Former Pease Air Force Base**

In August 1992, approximately 1,100 acres of land of the former Pease Air Force Base were transferred to the Fish and Wildlife Service for creation of the Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Located along New Hampshire's southern seacoast in the town of Newington, the refuge is a key stop for migratory water fowl traveling along the Atlantic Flyway.

Nestled against the Great Bay, an estuary that feeds into the Atlantic Ocean, the site provides prime migration and winter habitat for a variety of protected species, including the bald eagle, peregrine falcon, common loon, pied-billed grebe, osprey, black ducks, and upland sandpiper. And for workers on lunch break and walkers taking advantage of the trails, Great Bay provides a scenic nearby retreat.

Pease Air Force Base was closed in March 1991, and the Air Force has worked since that time to restore the property. In summer 2000, they completed all construction activities for the site, leaving only long-term monitoring of clean-up remedies. Besides the wildlife refuge, other property on the Pease Base site is currently being used or developed for commercial and light industrial facilities. The base's airfield is also now a fully operational commercial airport.



Entrance to Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge at the former Pease Air Force Base.

**Aroostook National Wildlife Refuge—Former Loring Air Force Base**

Established in 1998, four years after Loring Air Force Base closed, the Aroostook National Wildlife Refuge sits in the middle of rural Maine. The Air Force transferred 4,700 acres to the Fish and Wildlife Service from the 9,000-acre base, which is now under ongoing cleanup activities and long-term environmental monitoring to ensure cleanup performance.

The refuge is located in Aroostook County, Maine, the largest county east of the Mississippi, but with a population density of only 11.1 persons per square mile. Although sparsely populated, the region's landscape is dominated by agricultural crops like potatoes and broccoli, so the refuge protects valuable wildlife habitat.

In addition to forest and grasslands, the refuge administers more than 2,400 acres of wetland conservation easements throughout Aroostook County, providing homes for declining populations of the American woodcock and the American Black Duck, as well as species of migratory birds and resident wildlife. Cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, and bird watching are all possible on the six miles of trails constructed through the refuge. **PIP**



# Partners *In Progress*

EPA Update on Federal Facility Cleanup and Reuse

## Watertown Site Removed From the National Priorities List

Effective November 21, 2006, the National Priorities List will be one Superfund site shorter. The Army Materials Technology Laboratory (AMTL) site in Watertown, Massachusetts is slated for deletion just before Thanksgiving, marking the completion of all Superfund cleanup actions and goals.

Known as the Watertown Arsenal, the site was originally part of a 131-acre military facility built in 1816 for the production and research of weapons. In addition to conventional weapons work, a research nuclear reactor was used for molecular and atomic structure research in the 1960s. In 1968, 55 acres of the military land were sold to the town of Watertown, located on the Charles River six miles northwest of Boston. Watertown redeveloped the area into the Arsenal Mall shopping area, Arsenal Park, and apartment buildings. In 1988, Congress recommended the closure of the Watertown Arsenal, which occurred in 1995.

The 48-acre site was placed on the National Priorities List in 1994, due to surface water contamination from the weapons production. However, as a result of environmental cleanup and redevelopment of the site over the past decade, the former AMTL now provides a spectrum of benefits to the surrounding community, including the creation of more than 2,000 new jobs.

A large portion of the site is owned by Harvard University and accommodates a variety of office and commercial uses, including a regional arts center. Other uses within the site consist of a recreational park, a yacht club, and the historic



Waterfront Arsenal Commander's mansion.



Reused building at Watertown Arsenal.

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Commander’s Mansion, which the town owns and rents to the public for functions.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) announced September 8, 2006, that it concurs with the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) determination that all appropriate response actions under Superfund law have been completed, and are protective of human health and the environment. The public had an opportunity to review and comment on the cleanup documents. Because no comments were received during the public comment period, the deletion will move forward as planned. EPA, the Army, MassDEP, and community stakeholders plan to hold an event this fall celebrating the final step toward the site’s successful restoration and reuse. **PIP**



Public space at Watertown Arsenal.

**Smart Growth in Region 1**

When South Weymouth Naval Shipyard closed in 1997, there was some concern about what redevelopment plans might entail. The 1,450-acre Superfund site is located in the towns of Abington, Rockland, and Weymouth, 15 miles south of downtown Boston, Massachusetts. South Shore Tri-Town Development Corporation – the local redevelopment authority (LRA) – initially drew up plans that featured a large destination mall, which some feared would negatively impact air and water quality. In response to these concerns, the State asked that the LRA develop an alternative plan that would incorporate Smart Growth principles to provide opportunities for community revitalization and minimize negative environmental impacts.

Over the next several years, a variety of stakeholders actively participated in drafting the new land reuse plan. The Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Region 1 played an integral role, and provided funding to allow the LRA to hire a leading Smart Growth design firm. “This firm essentially advised us as to whether the LRA was going as far as they could,” says EPA’s Rosemary Monahan. According to Monahan, hiring the firm also ensured that the project would incorporate as many Smart Growth principles as possible. The LRA also hired a master developer with the

resources and experience to help in the planning and design phases of the project.

Smart growth planning efforts for the redevelopment of South Weymouth Naval Shipyard centered on balancing residential and commercial development. To ensure public participation, the LRA held public listening sessions, peer reviews, and other public meetings where residents and local leaders could voice their opinions and contribute to the decision-making. These meetings were also attended by municipal officials; representatives of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council; the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection; and EPA. The resulting dialogue between the community, regulators, and developers created a collaborative planning process and ensured that a variety of viewpoints would be considered.

During the planning process, key stakeholders were interested in developing a transit-oriented plan for the redevelopment site. EPA used a scoring tool called a Smart Growth Index to analyze proposals based on a variety of factors, such as the pedestrian-friendliness of various design options. The resulting redevelopment plan draws on a variety of commuter-friendly designs: it is located near a rail line leading to downtown Boston, contains less impervious surface per capita than the previous plan, and is more compact, making walking more attractive to residents. The development is also mixed-use—it will protect about 70 percent of the property’s natural lands and the remaining land will contain a mixture of homes, commercial space, and light industrial development.

EPA reviewed the final plan, which met the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act. The residents of Weymouth, Rockland, and Abington then voted on the proposal, and by summer 2005 the plan was approved. Although construction is expected to start within the next few months, the redevelopment will be “phased in” over a 10-year period. The project is anticipated to create some 5,000 construction jobs and, once complete, another 7,500 permanent jobs in the area.

The most significant aspect of the project from a planning perspective was incorporating Smart Growth principles early on in the second plan. Based on what was learned at South Weymouth, Region 1 is providing assistance to the LRA for Brunswick Naval Air Station, Maine, which was designated for closure by the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission. **PIP**

**Former Defense Site Attracts \$660M Pharmaceutical Plant**

Global pharmaceutical company Bristol-Myers Squibb has committed to build a \$660 million manufacturing plant on the former Fort Devens U.S. Army Base in Massachusetts, creating as many as 550 jobs for the local community.

The plant is scheduled to open in 2009 and is easily the biggest private investment in the decommissioned base,



Municipal Service Center at the Fort Devens site.

which is already home to some 80 companies, reported the *Boston Globe*. Devens is already home to a business park, conservation land, a residential community, and shops and services. A host of state agencies worked for eight months developing a plan to attract the pharmaceutical plant to the site; Massachusetts’ plan won over plans from Rhode Island, New York, and North Carolina. The average salary at the plant will be approximately \$60,000.

To meet the operating needs of Bristol-Myers Squibb, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) negotiated an early transfer of property from the Army, which allowed Bristol-Myers Squibb to purchase the 13-acre parcel prior to the completion of contaminated groundwater cleanup at



Renovated housing at the Fort Devens site.

the site. Early transfers are rare—only about a dozen have happened in EPA’s history—and this is the first early transfer to take place in EPA’s Region 1. MassDevelopment will take over the site cleanup, overseen by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, and the cleanup is expected to be completed by the end of 2007.

Located approximately 35 miles northwest of Boston, the former Fort Devens Army Base has undergone extensive environmental investigation and cleanup since its addition to the National Priorities List in 1989. Bristol-Myers Squibb will buy the land from MassDevelopment, a quasi-public agency that originally purchased nearly 4,000 of the

9,000 acres in Fort Devens from the Department of Defense in 1996.

According to MassDevelopment, Bristol-Myers Squibb plans to close on the property in early December and break ground shortly thereafter. **PIP**

**Wildlife Settles into Former Superfund Sites**

Hawks and other birds have replaced military aircraft in the skies over the former Pease and Loring Air Force Bases. Together with the former Fort Devens-Sudbury Army Training Annex—all completed Superfund sites—these rehabilitated land parcels have been added to the more than 540 refuges in the National Wildlife System throughout the United States. Overseen by the U.S. Department of Interior’s Fish and Wildlife Service, these refuges are reclaiming open spaces for wildlife preservation and recreation.

**Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge—Former Fort Devens-Sudbury Army Training Annex**

Bunkers that used to house ammunition on the former Fort Devens-Sudbury Army Training Annex are now being evaluated for a different purpose—wintertime bat habitat. In March 2005, the Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge officially opened for wildlife dependent recreation, returning the base to nature 10 years after it was selected for closure. The refuge is located about 25 miles west of Boston, Massachusetts, on 2,230 acres of restored land transferred from the U.S. Army. The land was deleted from the National Priority List in 2002.

The 3.5 square miles of pine and hardwood forest and wetlands now offer habitat for wildlife, and 10 miles of hiking trails for residents of the neighboring towns of Hudson, Maynard, Stow, and Sudbury. The refuge is also open for limited hunting and fishing.



Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge at the former Fort Devens.